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LETTER FROM HON. JOSEPH HOWE.

To the Electors of the County of Hants :

FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,—During the last Election the most important question presented for your consideration involved the propriety and the value of the financial compromise arranged by Mr. McLelan and myself with the Government of Canada. Objections were taken to the amount as insufficient and unfair,—to the mode, as personal and presumptuous,—to the abandonment of the Repeal agitation on the part of those who accepted it, which the compromise involved, and to my acceptance of a seat in the Cabinet as inconsistent and irreconcilable with my action from 1866 to 1869.

It is not my intention to revive the controversies by which the County was convulsed, or to write anything offensive to those who, at that time, honestly differed with me in opinion. But I desire to review the objections then taken in a spirit of moderation by the light of our three years' experience.

The sums recovered by that compromise amounted, in round numbers, to \$1,186,756 of Capital, and an annual payment of \$82,698 for the next ten years. These were heavy sums, and the question we have to ask ourselves is, were they just and fair? That they were quite as liberal as public opinion in the other Provinces would sanction at the time is proved by the difficulty of carrying them through Parliament, of which I shall have something to say by and bye. The best proof that they were all that Nova Scotia could fairly claim, is to be found in the fact that, during the past three years, neither the Government nor the people of this Province have demanded that a dollar be added to the Debt or to the annual subsidy established by that compromise; nor have any of the gentlemen who have gone to Ottawa in the interest of those who opposed me in 1869, ventured to file an account or to make a demand that could shake the foundations of the settlements made in that year. Certain matters of account, which it did not include, were promptly adjusted by the Finance Department;

and the expenditure on the new Provincial Building, that, for reasons which I shall presently explain, could not be dealt with by Mr. Rose, has since been settled by arbitration, and the money paid.

But there are other evidences to prove that Mr. McLelan and myself were not very unskilful negotiators. Though the political Opposition have ceased to ring the changes in Parliament upon the Nova Scotia Compromise, it has formed one count of the indictment preferred against the Government, in almost every hustling and platform speech uttered in Ontario during the past three years; while New Brunswick has been convulsed by an agitation for "better terms," largely based on what it is assumed were the too liberal concessions made to Nova Scotia in 1869.

A great deal has been said and written about the amount subsequently claimed and received on account of the new Provincial Building, and I have been blamed for not having had that sum included in the compromise. I have hitherto taken no part in this discussion. My chief reason was that I had no desire to embarrass those who might or might not be able to establish any fair claim which I had been unable to adjust. The time has come, however, when a few explanations touching this matter, are due to myself and to you.

McLelan and I went from Portland to Ottawa on Mr. Rose's assurance that he would fulfill the pledge, conveyed in Sir John Macdonald's letter to me, and deal, in an enlarged and liberal spirit, with the whole question of Finance. When we reached the seat of Government we were asked to state our case. This we did under seven different heads, including "Public Buildings." When that paper was submitted and considered, Mr. Rose frankly stated, that if he dealt with the subject in detail, as we had assumed he would, questions would probably be raised by the other Provinces, under some of the different heads, which

would certainly lead to protracted debates, and might possibly endanger the passage of the measure through Parliament. He therefore proposed to cover the whole ground of claim by an increase of the debt and of the subsidy. To this we consented, provided we could agree as to the amount. When the sums were named, included in a minute, and tendered to us with the sanction of the Privy Council, we both thought them so liberal, so near an approximation to any amount that we could fairly establish, that we closed the controversy without hesitation.

Now, you will perceive, that having accepted these two round sums, as a fair equivalent for all we had asked, I could not, as a gentleman, even if no pledge had been extorted in Parliament, go behind that agreement, or demand a dollar more. Even if we were getting \$80,000 too little, that would only be the twenty fifth part of what we had at stake. The practical questions which I had to consider at the moment were: Can we get any more now? Will it be wise to risk the loss of \$2,000,000 by hazardous delays and further chaffering, about a sum so comparatively insignificant? We decided to take the two millions, and I think we were right. Now, if I was in honor bound by this agreement from the moment it was signed, how much more was I restrained by what subsequently took place in Parliament? The measure, as you are aware, met with stout resistance. The political opposition, led by McKenzie and Blake, combined against it to a man, and, on the earlier divisions, they were reinforced from various quarters. While its fate was somewhat doubtful, a member put this question—"Suppose we pass this measure, what security have we that Mr Howe will not come back next year and demand a further sum?" I immediately rose in my place and answered "My word of honor; if the House sanctions this agreement I will never ask for another dollar." With this pledge, solemnly given to the House of Commons, how could I, even if no resolution had passed, violate my word, and take part in a renewed agitation, either about the cost of the Province Building, or of anything else. But no; Blake was not content to rely upon the mere word of a comparative stranger who was a political opponent. He offered a resolution, which the Government, to secure their measure, were compelled to accept, and which passed by a nearly unanimous vote. Here it is: Mr. Blake moved to add the following as section 3:

"The grants and provisions made by this Act and the British North America Act, 1867, shall be in full of all demands on Canada by Nova Scotia." Which was adopted.

This Resolution bound not only me but every member of the Government not to exceed the amounts there and then included in the Bill to which Parliament was giving its sanction. I was bound by my word of honor, no less than by Blake's Resolution, and this was my answer to everybody who urged me to take part in the agitation about the Provincial Building, down to the moment when the question was finally closed.

Why the Grit Opposition who, in 1869 would have deprived Nova Scotia of her just claim to Two Million of Dollars, were, in 1871 so anxious to give her more money, I will not stop to enquire, whatever I may suspect I know nothing. But this I do know, that the moment their Opposition was withdrawn, and Mr. Blake's resolution nullified, the Government submitted the questions arising out of the expenditure on the new Building to arbitration and paid the amount awarded without delay.

Of course neither the Local Government, Mr. Jones, nor any other independent member of Parliament was bound by any pledge given by me, nor by Mr. Blake's Resolution. They were free to act in any direction, or by any agencies they could influence, and, to the extent that they did exert themselves to secure the additional sum, they are entitled to credit. But this I may say—that, if the Bill had been defeated in 1869—if Blake and McKenzie and their followers could have stopped the payment of the Two Millions in that year, we should have had but a slim chance of recovering a dollar on account of the Provincial Building.

Two other questions were much discussed during the former contest in Hants: Should the Dominion members go that winter to Ottawa? Was I justified in accepting a seat in the Cabinet? Both questions may now I think, be fairly answered in the affirmative. The compromise measure, when it came to be more widely discussed and better understood, ultimately secured a majority from all the Provinces; but, in its earlier stages, it was sometimes in great jeopardy, and, if my memory serves me, on one division was only saved by a majority of eight. Now where would it have been if not sustained by my own and the votes of my twelve colleagues? And would it not have been wrecked had the Nova Scotia members remained at home, and had we lacked the support of the eleven who voted with us on that occasion? Had I refused to enter the Cabinet and aid in passing the measure, it is more than doubtful whether, in the face of an opposition so formidable, the Cabinet could have carried

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it ; and one thing is certain, that, had the Nova Scotia members remained at home, and refused to assist them, they never would have made the attempt. Fortunately wiser counsels prevailed. The necessity for direct taxation was averted—a sum sufficient to enable us to provide for all our public services was secured, and now, at the end of three years, whatever I may have suffered from the estrangement of old friends, I have the satisfaction to know that the peace of the country has never been disturbed for an hour, nor has the course of prosperity on which Nova Scotia had entered before Confederation, been interrupted, for the want of those pecuniary resources so essential to the easy working of her institutions, and to the development of her industry.

On one other branch of this subject I desire to make a brief explanation. It has been said, and the statement has been often repeated, that I took credit to myself for obtaining those financial concessions, and ignored the assistance and services of those who had assisted me in conducting the Anti-Confederate agitation.—This is not true, and no such foolish boast can be found in any thing that I have ever said or written. I have always acknowledged the services of those who first called attention to the financial unfairness of the Quebec resolutions, and of those who were associated with me in the subsequent movements against the passage of the British America Act, and in pressing on the Home Government a formal demand for its repeal ; and I say now that every man who wrote a line, made a speech, or exerted himself in any way, on our side in that protracted struggle, though he failed, as I failed, to accomplish the higher objects aimed at, contributed to create the state of feeling which made a financial compromise possible in 1869. All that I have ever claimed for Mr. McLellan and myself was this that when Repeal was hopeless, and the financial pear was ripe, we plucked at all hazards, while others declared it was forbidden fruit—that we availed ourselves of that

"tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune,
Omitted, ne'er returns."

And brought our ship into port with a valuable freight on board, instead of lingering till the ebb, and leaving her to be nipt or driven out to sea.

Perhaps you will not think it time lost if I ask your attention to one or two other matters, in relation to which I trust I shall be able to show that my presence in Ottawa has been of some advantage to the Province. Before Confederation all the patronage of the Public Depart-

ments was dispensed by the Provincial Government, who naturally, in its distribution, consulted the members of both branches by whom they were sustained. The Confederation Act transferred to the Dominion a valuable portion of this patronage. All the appointments in the Customs, the Inland Revenue, the Post Office, and on the Railway, were to be made from Ottawa, and we were naturally jealous and suspicious as to the future working of a system so widely different from our own. When I went to Ottawa I found my old friend, Mr. Kenny, fighting the Heads of Departments single handed. He was not sorry to be re-inforced, and we at once claimed that no appointment should be made in Nova Scotia without our being consulted ; and we agreed that, before offering advice, we would endeavor to ascertain the opinions of our supporters in the House.—When Dr. Tupper took Mr. Kenny's place he loyally co-operated in carrying out this policy, and now, at the end of three years, I am happy to be able to assure you that upwards of sixty Nova Scotians have been appointed to valuable places under Government, or promoted in the Departments to which they were attached ; and that, in every instance, your Representatives in the Privy Council have been consulted, and where it could be done with any propriety and convenience, the opinions and wishes of our friends in the two branches have been first ascertained. This, then, as regards patronage is a very near approach to our old system, and if carried out in good faith, as I have no doubt it will be, must obviate many of the difficulties which we all anticipated would arise in the practical working of the Confederation. In the Civil Service at Ottawa Nova Scotia has not yet got any thing like her fair share of the appointments to which she is entitled. But nearly all the places had been filled up before I went there. A good many young men have been provided for during the last three years, and it will be the duty of whoever hereafter may represent the interests of Nova Scotia at the capital, to see that her people are not passed over when vacancies occur.

There is another question of some importance upon which our three years experience is calculated to throw some light. When a repeal of the British America Act was proved to be unattainable, from the formidable combination of both parties in England, and from the decisive action of the two Houses of Parliament, did I exercise a sound judgment in determining to strengthen Sir John Macdonald's Government, and trust to its sense of justice and honorable co-operation ; or should I have thrown myself into the

arms of Mr. McKenzie, and have trusted to the tender mercies of the Grits of Ontario? On public and personal grounds I was reluctant to do the latter. With scarcely an exception the Ontario Opposition were Confederates to a man. They had supported Brown and the coalition which carried the measure. They stood prepared to maintain it. During the session of 1867 they turned a deaf ear to our fiery denunciations, and hardly a man of them had the courage to admit that Nova Scotia had been unfairly treated. To Huntington and Dorian from the Province of Quebec, I shall ever feel grateful for sympathy openly expressed, and from one or two members from the Upper Provinces I received, for "auld lang syne," some personal courtesies which it is pleasant to remember. But the great body of the Ontario Opposition, with their leaders at their head, stood aloof from us. They did not take us into their counsels. McKenzie took it for granted that we had no alternative but to fall in behind him. He had no sympathy to waste, no remedy to propose. Almost all our Nova Scotia members felt and resented this treatment. On personal grounds, therefore, I had no desire to join his party.

But, when I had to deal with your interests, there could be no question as to the line of action to be pursued. A large majority of the members of the Cabinet were old acquaintances or personal friends, with whom it would be pleasant to act if I could, and with whom I might reasonably expect to have influence from the start. My personal feelings would have decided the question had the public advantages been evenly balanced. But they were not. Your interests lay all on one side. Nova Scotia had suffered enough. Why should I lead her into hopeless opposition, and leave her, perhaps for the next ten years, without influence, patronage, or any reasonable chance of provision for her public works. Had I done this I should have been an idiot. But I had studied Nova Scotia's interests too long, and led and guided her too often, to make such an

egregious blunder. The moment the conviction was forced upon me that she must remain in the Confederacy, I determined that, if she could not get out, she should count for something within it. And she has counted for something. With her financial grievances redressed, and her people freed from the danger of direct taxation—with her two representatives in the Cabinet, and her nineteen able men (presently to be twenty one) on the floor of the House, Nova Scotia has occupied, for the last three years, and must continue to occupy a fine position, which may be improved or weakened just in proportion to the mental calibre of the men she selects to represent her. I am well aware that many old friends blamed me for "accepting the situation," as the phrase went, but now that everybody has accepted it, I trust it will be perceived, that in changing front, I only anticipated the inevitable in time to prepare for it, and that the new formation, when it came, was the only one by which the interests of Nova Scotia could have been protected.

It is not my intention to weary you with a general defence of the action and measures of the Government. I should have liked very much, had my health permitted, to have explained these to you upon the hustings. But as I am deprived of that pleasure, I must refer you to the very able speeches recently made by the Premier and the Finance Minister in Ontario, which, I presume, will be republished in the Provincial papers. Between you and me, the personal and political relations have been long so intimate and so kindly, that I am very anxious to preserve your good opinion, and in offering the few personal explanations which this letter contains, I trust you will acquit me of any other motive than a desire to clear up some grounds of controversy in which it is natural that you should take an interest.

Believe me,

Yours truly,

JOSEPH HOWE.

JULY 22, 1872.

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